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ABSTRACT

The Spanish version of "Sesame Street" was used in a project in a class of 12 students in the second semester of first-year Spanish at Phillips Exeter Academy, and an attempt was made to evaluate the usefulness of the series in second language acquisition. This account of the project has five parts: (1) a history of the production of "Plaza Sesamo" in Latin America; (2) a description of Exeter Academy -- its history, curriculum, and student population; (3) an analysis of the data derived from questionnaires on the students' motivation, needs and interests in their study of Spanish; (4) a description of "Plaza Sesamo" films, indicating similarities to and differences from the English- language version; and (5) some preliminary conclusions. The students believed that the greatest benefits of the films were improvement in vocabulary, especially through visual representation of words, and improvement in listening comprehension skills. Association with visual images occurred within the students' own cultural concepts and role models; they reacted more favorably to dubbed segments taken directly from "Sesame Street" than to segments produced live in Mexico. It is hypothesized that cognitive concepts must be taught, on the introductory level, in terms and images that are culturally recognizable to the audience. (AMH)

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Plaza Sesamo and Spanish Language Learning

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Part I. The Development and Early Implementation of Plaza Sesamo

Plaza Sesamo is an educational television program designed for pre-school children and produced in Mexico City in the Spanish language, utilizing format and techniques developed for Sesame Street in the United States. It came into being in 1971-72 as a joint effort of the Children's Television Workshop, New York, and educators and communications experts from various countries of Spanish Latin America. After extended pre-production research, pilot-program production and testing of trial groups of children before and after viewing of the pilot series, Plaza Sesamo ~~extended~~ entered into full time broadcasting in 1973.

The program is directed, as is Sesame Street, to 3, 4 and 5 year old children as a means of "preparing them to cope more adequately with early school learning."[1] At the first introductory study meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, in March 1971, attention was concentrated on two major considerations, the appropriateness of the Sesame Street format, curriculum and technique for Latin American pre-school audiences (for the purposes of this paper reference to "Latin America" in relation to Plaza Sesamo is intended to cover the Spanish-speaking countries of the Western Hemisphere) and whether the television medium was an appropriate device for reaching as broad a target population as possible, bearing in mind the primary objective of Sesame Street in the United States of reaching disadvantaged children in particular. Within this

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[1] Evaluation of Plaza Sesamo: A Proposal to the Ford Foundation. Edward L. Palmer, June 1972, p. 3.

framework to what extent would Sesame Street require profound adaptation and alteration for Latin American audiences as opposed to simple translation in to Spanish of the programs used in the United States? While statistics indicated that 98% of United States households owned television sets, there were no reliable data available concerning television ownership and usage in Latin America, including demographic breakdowns, and thus little data on the basis of which to calculate the size and accessibility of the potential audience. A further problem related to the diversity of Latin American societies and cultures and the question of whether a single program format could have application beyond single country or regional boundaries.[2] National and regional differences in accent and vocabulary are extreme in Latin America.

As to the appropriateness of the television medium for pre-school education in Latin America, practical as well as educational considerations formed a basis of the original conclusions. In the first place, while it was assumed that pre-school children in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America had less access to television in the home than did children in the United States, the possibility of reaching groups in health-care or day-care (or similar) centers was recognized, even though at the time it was calculated that only 4% of the 24,000,000 Latin American children between the ages of three

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[2]Summary of the First Latin American Curriculum Seminar, Caracas, Venezuela -- Children's Television Workshop, March 1971, p. 6.

and six years attended educational or day-care programs.[3] Despite the absence of precise data it was taken as an axiom that the general television audience among lower-income groups in Latin America was growing, as was interest in early childhood education. (In the latter context one of the subjects it was hoped to explore was the question of whether exposure to a program such as Sesame Street might affect children's perception of themselves and parents' perception of their children as learners). In practical terms it was recognized that "immediate development of conventional pre-school programs which present the Sesame Street curriculum in a classroom setting would certainly represent an unattainable--and in terms of broad priorities an undesirable--luxury."[4] On the other hand it was the consensus of the planning group that in and of itself pre-school education is, if viewed in proper perspective, not a luxury in the Latin American context, especially in the case of severely environmentally deprived children. It was hoped that Plaza Sesamo might stimulate "further educational undertakings aimed at attacking illiteracy or other educational problems within other segments of the population" and "stimulate the growth of cooperative viewing situations, thus permitting the program and subsequent programs with similar objectives to reach an even wider audience than now available."[5]

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[3] Palmer, op. cit., p. 3.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 4.

Out of the deliberations of the first planning group certain preliminary conclusions were reached:

1. There appeared to exist the likelihood that television was an appropriate medium for reaching pre-school children in Latin America.

2. The creation of a pilot program to form the basis of further research was justified.

3. A research ~~faculty~~ facility should be established in Mexico City composed of Latin American and United States representatives (the latter from the Children's Television Workshop). Direction of the ~~faculty~~ facility was entrusted to Dr. Rogelio Diaz-Guerrero, Director of the Center for the Study of the Behavioral Sciences of the National University of Mexico.

4. To the extent that viewing children could identify with the chief characters of the new program, the Sesame Street format seemed adaptable to Latin American audiences. Due to language and pronunciation variations within the region, "neutral" Spanish should be used.

5. In considering the curriculum of Sesame Street it was pointed out that analysis of the results of the first season of the program indicated that the capabilities of children for learning through television had previously been underestimated and that more elaborate skills were included in the second season. The basic goal categories, it was agreed, could be useable in Latin America, subject to changes in the educational content and entertainment motifs to reflect the Latin American life style and attitudes.

6. Four curriculum goal categories were established:

   a. Symbolic Representation

      1. Letters

      2. Numbers

      3. Geometric figures

   b. Cognitive Organization

      1. Perceptual Discrimination and Organization

      2. Relational Concepts

      3. Classification

   c. Reasoning and Problem Solving

      1. Problem Sensitivity and Attitudes toward Inquiry

      2. Inferences and Causality

      3. Generating and Evaluating Explanations and Solutions

   d. The Child and His World

      1. Self

      2. Social Units

In determining the procedure to be followed in transmitting Sesame Street to a Latin American target audience two ~~alterations~~ alternatives were considered, only one of which appeared practical. The first alternative would be to export only the production process, i.e. starting production from scratch and making local equivalents of the original programs, with local animation, local actors, local writers and production personnel and local research staff. Such a concept was considered

purely academic, since nowhere in Latin America did the funds or facilities exist to carry out such a complex research and production task.

It was decided to make use, to the greatest extent possible, of existing material from the first two years' production of Sesame Street which totalled two 130 hour sessions of programming. From this supply selected live action film, puppet sequences and animation would make up about 46% of the new 130 hour series, newly produced inserts of similar material would represent 16% and new studio production using a live cast of Latin American performers would make up the balance. The cost, exclusive of curriculum planning and research, of the material taken from Sesame Street shows and dubbed into Spanish was $2,500,000. The material was specially selected to insure universal international suitability and to exclude elements of United States culture. It was recognized that this procedure was at best a compromise with the ideal of a wholly new production but the anticipated positive results were expected to outweigh the factors sacrificed and it was concluded that the effect could be achieved without violation of any particular country's social values or approach to education.

While the pilot film was in process of production Dr. Diaz-Guerrero was involved in formative research in two areas: first, to translate into Spanish seven of the tests designed by the Educational Testing Service, of Princeton, New Jersey for knowledge level testing in connection with Sesame Street and administer them to 200 four year old children from low income homes in and around Mexico City in

order to evaluate their existing knowledge level. Because unlike children in the United States of comparable age, Latin American children at this age have had almost no exposure to television, books, or other informal sources of school-related concepts, this testing revealed important new information about the lowest level of prior achievement to which the program would have to be directed.

Second, the research group carried out a program of appeal testing to measure attention-holding power and entertainment qualities of various contemplated program elements.[7] Out of these discussions and research certain fundamental changes from the Sesame Street curriculum were introduced into Plaza Sesamo.

One shift occurred in the emphasis given certain goal categories. To meet Latin American requirements it was decided to place more emphasis on self-concept enhancement, on reasoning and problem solving and on the development of social skills.

Because prevailing practice in the teaching of beginning reading throughout Latin America places more initial emphasis upon whole words and sentences than in the United States (due to the more logical and phonetic quality of the Spanish language*) it was decided to increase these elements while decreasing emphasis on the knowledge of individual letters of the alphabet.

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[7]Palmer, op. cit., p. 11.

*For a discussion of this characteristic see Anderson and Boyer.

New curriculum areas were added. In addition to new emphasis on more advanced basic literary skills than were present in Sesame Street, a new curriculum area dealing with basic notation was included.

An entirely Latin American setting and totally Latin American cast were planned. The setting was to be a small plaza, with a backdrop view of distant mountains and the presence of a number of animals (chickens, dogs, etc.) to give the impression of an urban or semi-rural setting.

Formative research by Dr. Diaz-Guerrero's team relating to segment appeal was found useful in determining, on the basis of the pilot film, which segments held children's attention, which had relatively greater degrees of comprehensibility (the degree to which their entertainment and education output was understood as intended), and the degree to which the program elicited active participation and response among viewers. Those ranking high in these categories were repeated in the same or similar form, those ranking low were eliminated or revised.[8]

Preliminary pre-broadcast investigation by Dr. Diaz-Guerrero's researchers produced interesting data on the potential audience in Mexico. The group visited 5056 "households" from low to middle class levels, approximately 50% in Mexico City and the rest in Guadalajara,

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[8]Palmer, Op. cit., pp. 14-15.

Monterey, Saltillo, Merida and Ahuzotla (the last in the State of Mexico). Of these only 70% were actual households, the rest, as Dr. Diaz-Guerrero states, were "cobbler shops, barber shops, grocery stores, churches, schools, houses of prostitution, empty lots, 'don't know' or 'don't want to cooperate.'" Of the 3515 actual households, 70.5%
70% had television sets, 68% black and white and 2.5% color. Of the 2461 households with television, 50% had children in the Plaza Sesamo target age group (2-5 years).

One interesting discovery was that with a mean population of 7 per household there was a high probability that if there ~~was~~ were one child in the home within the target age group, there would be another. In 1212 households with at least one child between 2 and 5, there were found 1921 children in that age range. There was found to exist a substantial variation in factors investigated (mother's education, father's education and occupation and socio-economic position) between Monterrey in the north, which resembled more the United States in social indicators, and Merida in Yucatan in the south, which more closely resembled underdeveloped countries in the distribution of social indicators. Television ownership varied from 75% and 76% in Guadalajara and Mexico City, to 61% in Merida and Saltillo. In terms of social indicators, Mexico City ranked midway between the extremes of Monterrey and Merida just as it relates to them in geographic location.[9]

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[9]Rogelo Diaz-Guerrero, Educational Television for Pre-school Children in Mexico, 1973.

During the first telecast season of Plaza Sesamo in Mexico City, Dr. Diaz-Guerrero, under a partial grant from the Ford Foundation, undertook a controlled experimental study of the effects of the program. Children from 3 day care centers in the Federal District numbering 212 in total, equally divided by age (3, 4 and 5 years old) and sex participated, of which 173 completed the study over a six-month period. From a pre-study questionnaire answered by the mothers of all the children it was determined that nearly all qualified as to lower class status, that is to say, the father (or head of the family) had not completed primary school and was employed as an unskilled worker.

One half of the children by age and sex (the experimental group) viewed Plaza Sesamo for 50 minutes a day, 5 days a week, until the 130 program first year cycle was completed. The other half served as a control group and were not shown Plaza Sesamo. Elaborate measures were taken to assure that the control group would have no exposure at home or elsewhere to the program.

Nine tests originally developed by the Educational Testing Service for use in evaluation of Sesame Street were adapted, translated and administered to all the children before, during and after the viewing program. They covered general knowledge, numbers, relations, embedded figures (Herman Witkins Embedded Figures Test), parts of the whole, ability to sort, letters and words, classification skills and oral comprehension. The results were related to measures of attention to the programs and attendance.

As briefly summarized by Dr. Diaz-Guerrero, highly significant differences between viewers and non-viewers were found in the areas of gain in general knowledge numbers, letters and words as taught by Plaza Sesamo. Significant differences were found in five cognitive areas only indirectly related to Plaza Sesamo, as well as ~~for~~ in oral comprehension, a test completely independent of the program content. The largest differences occurred in 4 year olds; the smallest in 3 year olds. The rate of learning was consistently faster for the experimental group than the controls across the three testing periods. Amount of attention correlated as high as .49 with gains as measured by several tests. Low but significant correlations were found between attendance and amount of gain.[10]

In Diaz-Guerrero's analysis it is pointed out that among the most interesting results of the tests is the fact that ~~evidence measures~~ in some of cognitive ~~improvement~~ learning seemingly unrelated to the main thrust of the curriculum, ~~show~~ measurable improvement was shown in children who viewed the program as contrasted with those who did not.

The evaluative research on Plaza Sesamo is continuing and data beyond Diaz-Guerrero's initial testing (of a comprehensiveness similar to the studies of Bogatz and Ball on two years of Sesame Street) ~~is~~ are not available. It is the intent of the Children's Television Workshop and the Latin American research staff to carry out similar investigation in Argentina and Colombia as well as further work

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[10]The test technique and results are detailed in "Learning by Televised 'Plaza Sesamo' in Mexico," Journal of Educational Psychology 1974, by Rogilio Diaz-Guerrero and Wayne H. Holtzman.

in Mexico, at three age levels, three, five and seven. (The broader age base relates to the higher first-grade entry age in Latin America than in the United States.) Among the key variables to be investigated are:

1. What is the effect of age on learning? What is the nature of the variations in learning between three, five and seven year olds?

2. What is the effect of socio-economic status on learning in this medium? To what extent do different socio-economic levels learn different amounts or kinds of things through viewing Plaza Sesamo?

3. To what extent and how does school attendance affect learning in this medium? How does the learning of children who view at home differ from that of children who view in large groups in a formal school setting?

4. What is the effect on the parents of the children viewing? Are there changes in (a) parents' views of knowledge--what is it and how is it acquired, and (b) parents' views of their own children--their image of the children as capable and productive learners, due to their children's participation in the viewing of the program?[11]

One of the areas of continuing interest in Sesame Street and its foreign language descendents, such as Plaza Sesamo, is in its possible application to educational processes unrelated to the original goal of preparing pre-school age children, particularly the economically disadvantaged, for the formal school experience. As indicated by the

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[11] Palmer, op. cit. Background to the Proposal, p. 14.

planning group of Plaza Sesamo such applications might include older children not previously involved in formal school training and illiterate adults. Another possible application is the use of the Sesame Street format and technique in foreign language training in the United States. The results of a limited investigation of the latter area are described in the balance of this paper.

Part II. Background to the Study

Between February and May, 1975, I have been involved in an attempt to assess the effectiveness of Plaza Sesamo in Spanish-language training at the introductory level for secondary school students. The target group of the study is composed of 12 male students in the second semester of first year Spanish at the Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire. The class comprises what is described by the faculty as the "slower" of two sections of first year Spanish. In the main they represent younger students with less prior Spanish training than those of the other section.

The class meets six days a week at 8:55 a.m. for 50 minutes per class session. The Academy catalogue describes the course as: "A two semester sequence which, with Spanish 21-22 (second year course) aims to teach elementary Spanish, both spoken and written. The basic text, Barton and Tyler, Beginning Spanish Course (2nd Edition), is complemented by thorough study of elementary reading texts such as Pittaro, Nuevos

Cuentos Contados; Rodriguez, Cuentos Alegres (3rd Edition) which round out the course."

At each Saturday morning class the target section is shown 35 to 40 minutes of Plaza Sesamo material. The viewing is followed by a review of new vocabulary and grammar contained in the film seen that day and discussion with the class or with individual students of the film content and their reaction to it, in terms of what they understood, enjoyed and thought useful.

Phillips Exeter Academy is one of the most highly regarded secondary educational institutions in the United States, as well as one of the oldest private boarding schools of its type in the country. It was established in 1781 and commenced the 1974-75 academic year with an enrollment of 958 in grades 9 through 12. Since 1970, female students have been admitted to grades 10 through 12 (and to grade 9 as day students) and now number 109. The student body is drawn from 43 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and 25 foreign countries. For the 1974-75 year the Academy received 1501 applications for new admissions of which 349 entered the school, 209 from public institutions and 140 from private and parochial schools. (This ratio of public to private school sources of entering students is roughly the average of the last 10 years). While there is wide diversity in the geographic areas represented by the student body, heavy concentration is still evident in the northeastern area of the country. In 1974-75, 670 students came from the New England states, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Exeter has for some time been distinguished by the large school endowment and the substantial number of students receiving scholarship aid. In 1974-75, 268 students received a total of $556,100 of such assistance (based on financial need) for an average of $2,075 per student (the boarding tuition charge is $3500 per annum; day student tuition charge is $2110), exclusive of children of faculty and staff members who automatically receive full scholarships and four foreign students attending the Academy under foreign exchange programs. A breakdown of family income statistics reveals a range of annual income of families of scholarship students ranging from $0-2000 to $26,000 and over. The median income of families of scholarship students is $10,000-12,000 per annum.

After World War II, the Academy enlarged and systematized its recruitment of students from a wider geographic base than had been the case previously (although Exeter drew students from throughout the country since the early part of this century to a greater degree than many other northeastern preparatory schools). In the 1960's this effort was expanded to include recruitment of socially and economically disadvantaged students. Normal recruitment efforts are currently supplemented by cooperation with the ABC program nationwide. In the current school year there are enrolled 68 Black students, of whom 60 receive scholarship assistance. The performance of such ~~disadvantaged~~ students has been substantially higher than originally expected, according to Academy staff. Basically all, in keeping with the student body in general, attend college after graduation from Exeter. Lack of success

of disadvantaged or minority students has apparently related in the main to scholastic problems rather than social difficulties (except in the case of American Indian students).

Exeter emphasizes scholastic achievement and in general new students entering the school have placed in the upper 20 percentile of their previous schools. SSAT (Secondary School Aptitude Test) results of students ~~ending~~ entering in 1974 showed that 38% ranked in the upper 10 percentile of all those writing the SSAT last year. The median percentile scores for boys was 88 and for girls 84. An interesting factor of SSAT testing, in the experience of the Academy, is that high achievement in test categories relating to mathematics aptitude correlates higher with eventual success at the Academy than does a high score in verbal achievement or reading comprehension.

In the 1960's the requirement that all students study Greek or Latin as well as a modern language was eliminated (although the Academy still offers a Classics diploma) and in 1973 the minimum modern language requirement was reduced from 3 years to 2 1/2 years. In the first semester of 1974-75, enrollment in modern language courses totalled 809, divided as follows: French 490, Spanish 188, German 88, and Russian 39. (These are the normal languages taught in the regular curriculum, although Italian and Portuguese are available to seniors on an elective basis.) This breakdown correlates with the higher emphasis on French in secondary schools in the northeast than is the case nationally, where overall Spanish is more widely studied.[12]

[12]Paul Pimsleur and Donald M. Sundland, Under Achievement in Foreign Language Learning (Final Report), U.S. Dept. of HEW, 1963, p. 15.

Exeter is distinguished by a high ratio of faculty to students and since the early 1930's has operated under the so-called Harkness Plan in which individual class sections are generally limited to 15 students meeting with the teacher around a large conference table (except for those science courses requiring a laboratory setting).

In order to provide background data on the target group a questionnaire was prepared and given to the class (see Appendix A). (The questionnaire was reviewed before submission to the group with Dr. David Harman of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.) The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide acquaintance with the participants and to afford the means of identifying the sub-groups within the class in order to facilitate the identification of factors apparently contributing to the relative degrees of success of the students (In this context it represented an exercise in stratification as defined by Harman).[13] The questions were designed to reveal salient data with respect to the students' age, socio-economic background, prior language training and some elements of their motivation and attitudes toward foreign language learning.

The crucial importance of the factors of motivation and attitude cannot be underestimated in any study of the foreign language learning process. Perhaps the most far-reaching and significant

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[13]David Harman, "Functional Education for Family Life Planning II," p. 6 World Education, New York, 1973.

research in this area is that carried out by Gardner, Lambert et al.,[14] attempting to determine in essence why some students learn a foreign language quickly and expertly while others, given the same opportunities to learn, are unsuccessful. Rejecting the traditional answers that "it all depends on how the second language is taught," and "some people have a knack for languages while others do not," Gardner and Lambert (others have approached the question along similar lines) addressed the subject as social psychologists. In broad terms, they describe a number of variable characteristics of the language learning process.

"Over and above aptitude, one would anticipate competence."[15] ? Out of their studies of second language acquisition in Canada, Maine, Louisiana, Connecticut and the Philippines, Gardner and Lambert have evolved a socio-psychological theory of language learning which indicates that two independent factors (other than intelligence) contribute most substantially to success in language acquisition, these being aptitude and motivation.

Aptitude, as measured by the Modern Language Aptitude Test (Lambert and Sapon, 1959) represents the ability to code auditory phonetic material, the ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences, the ability to learn quickly a large number of word associations and the ability to infer linguistic rules from new linguistic contexts.[16] The motivational aspects are described by Gardner

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[14]Robert C. Gardner and Wallace E. Lambert, Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning, Newbury House Publ., 1972.

[15]Gardner and Lambert, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

[16]John H. Schumann, "Affective Factors and the Problem of Age in Second Language Acquisition," Harvard University, 1975.

and Lambert as deriving from the learner's psychological preparedness to adopt aspects of behavior which characterize members of another linguistic-cultural group. His ethnocentric tendencies and attitudes toward members of the other group are believed to determine his relative success in learning the new language. Motivation to learn is determined in the view of Gardner and Lambert by the learner's attitudes toward the other group and his orientation toward the learning process. Two types of motivation are suggested. "Instrumental" motivation is that reflecting a utilitarian purpose for language acquisition--using the language acquired in the course of furthering professional, social or other goals of personal achievement. If the student views his acquisition of the language as a means of achieving a higher level of communication with another (valued) society, becoming more like that society's members or, indeed, a member of that society itself, his motivation is regarded as "integrative." Integrative motivation is thought to be the stronger factor of the two and the one more likely to lead to long-range success in language learning, implying as it does a positive attitude toward the values represented by the society whose language the student is attempting to master.[17] Such factors as parental attitude and support, peer attitudes etc. are elements in the process cited by Gardner and Lambert and others (and are factors in the study covered by this paper). They support and influence, however, the motivational elements of the language-learning procedure independently of aptitude and intelligence.

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[17]Gardner and Lambert, op. cit., p. 3.

In her discussion of language and behavior, Wilga Rivers, speaking of the various stages of foreign language proficiency, notes that instrumentally motivated students (who make up the majority of American foreign language students according to Lambert) may find their enthusiasm waning before they reach Rivers' third stage of "language mastery." She points out that language teachers must be alert to detect differences in motivation if they are to encourage students to continue to the "mastery" stage.[18]

Gardner and Lambert have approached the learning of a second language much as O.H. Mowrer looks at a child's first-language learning (in a form distinct from B.F. Skinner's theory). "Word learning in talking birds and children takes place when the sound of words have come to carry a reinforcement power in themselves, so that the learner wants to produce words. The sounds become reinforcing agents through association with the users of words who are held in affection by the learner. Language learning is motivated by a basic desire to be like valued people in one's environment, first family members and then others in the linguistic community. The language learner has to identify with language users to the extent that he wants to be like them linguistically, and undoubtedly in many other ways. It is not the case, as Skinner would have it (says Lambert), that the learner must emit words and have them immediately reinforced. All that is necessary is that the word be said by the bird trainer or the child's

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[18]Wilga M. Rivers, The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher, University of Chicago, p. 89, 1974.

mother and that this sound be followed by a reinforcing state for the learner. In similar fashion (Lambert maintains) the learner must want to identify with members of the other linguistic-cultural group and must be willing to take on very subtle aspects of their behavior, such as their language or even their style of speech.[19]

In the most recent development of this line of research Gardner et al. in 1974 designed a test group intended to serve as a parallel to the aptitude measurement of the MLAT in assessing students' attitudinal approach to languages. Based on this research conducted with primary and secondary school students in London, Ontario, a model was developed of second language acquisition, which reflects the social milieu of the student, differences in intelligence, aptitude and motivation and the setting of the language learning--whether formal or informal (in school or other) (see Appendix B).[20]

According to Pimsleur et al. in a 1963 study of the nature and causes of under-achievement in foreign language acquisition, the lack of ability to learn a foreign language cannot be equated with low intelligence. The correlation between intelligence and success in foreign language study is modest--about .40. Lack of success occurs among gifted as well as less bright learners.[21] Pimsleur recognizes the factor of motivation and ascribes 15 to 20% of variance in achievement

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[19]Wallace Lambert, "Psychological Approaches to Second Language Learning and Bilingualism in Curriculum Change in the Foreign Languages," College Entrance Exam Board, 1963.

[20]Gardner, R.C., Smythe, P.C., Kirby, D.M. and Bramwell, J.R. "Second Language Acquisition: A Social Psychological Approach," Ontario Ministry of Education, London, Ont., 1974 in Schuman, op. cit.

[21]Pimsleur, et al., p. 4.

to it (the other principal factor in his view being verbal intelligence). In Pimsleur's study of mid-western high school Spanish students, he found less variance in motivational intensity than in "desire to learn" (both on the basis of tests ~~designed~~ designed by Lambert). Pimsleur infers that the success of a foreign language student may be less affected by whether his motivation is instrumental or integrative than by the degree to which he sees the relevance of foreign language study to his life, either for practical (instrumental) purposes or for pleasure (integrative).[22]

Part III. Evaluation of Study Data

As mentioned previously, the target group is composed of 12 students in the second semester of first-year Spanish study. Nine are members of the 9th grade (first year or "junior" class at Exeter) and three are in the 10th grade ("lower middle" or second year Exeter class). Their geographic origins are as follows: New York, 4; New Hampshire, 3 (including two sons of Exeter faculty members); and one each from Ohio, Illinois, Connecticut, Colorado and the U.S. Virgin Islands. One is between 14 and 14 1/2 years old, 6 between 14 1/2 and 15, 2 between 15 and 15 1/2, 2 between 15 1/2 and 16, and one between 16 and 16 1/2. Nine came to Exeter from public schools and three

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[22]Pimsleur, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

from private or parochial institutions, an incidence of prior public school attendance which is higher than the Academy average.

As to the length of time the students have studied Spanish, three are in their first semester of Spanish at Exeter and nine in their second. Eight students have studied Spanish elsewhere, of which all but one studied the language elsewhere for a year or more. Two studied French elsewhere for one year or less, and two have studied French for two years or more elsewhere.

The students were questioned regarding their motives in studying Spanish and asked to respond in one of the following categories:

a. To fulfill the minimum language requirement of Exeter.

b. To improve conversational skills.

c. Because of interest in Spanish culture and history.

d. Because of interest in Spanish literature.

None of the respondents ascribed their reason for study of Spanish only to a desire to fulfill the minimum language requirement. All but one list improvement of conversational skills. Six state that reason alone while five combine it with one or more other motives. One respondent introduces independently his own motive not included in the choices offered, i.e. general interest in learning a foreign language (not specifically Spanish). He studied Spanish for two years in his previous school and has not studied any other language. Response breakdown to this question regarding motive is as follows:

A	B	C	D	Other	A&B	ABC	B&D
0	6	0	0	1	3	1	1

Six of the respondents express intentions of studying Spanish after graduation from Exeter (only one, who describes himself as undecided, does not express plans to go to college), five are undecided and only one states that he does not intend to study Spanish after Exeter.

The students were asked to rate themselves for ability in three categories of language proficiency, written, spoken and grammar. Responses are as follows:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Bad	F/G/E	F/G	F/P
Written		5	4		1	1		1
Spoken	1	4	5	1			1	
Grammar		5	5	1			1	

The experience of travel to a Spanish-speaking country correlates highly with high self-rating of Spanish proficiency and, as will be seen, with success in study of the language. Five students report having visited one or more Spanish-speaking countries at one time or another. Of these, one rates his verbal ability as excellent and two rate this ability as good.

As indicated above, only one respondent does not at present have firm plans to attend college. Of the remaining eleven, seven

except or hope to attend graduate school. The interest in graduate study correlates highly with the educational experience of fathers, of whom all attended college and seven completed graduate school. (Interestingly enough, only one student reports that his father is an Exeter graduate).

Gardner and others place considerable emphasis in assessing students' motivation and attitude toward foreign language study on parental example and influence, and an effort was made in the questionnaire to develop data on family background. Nine of the respondents report that at least one member of the immediate family possesses foreign language capability while six report Spanish capability at home. Four have close family relatives who are foreign-born. It is evident, also, that, in common with the fathers, the students' mothers have a relatively high level of educational accomplishment. Seven of the mothers have completed college and two have completed graduate school and are practicing professionals. One completed one year of college, one completed high school and one completed high school and secretarial school.

Five students (including two faculty sons) are receiving scholarship assistance. The 25% of non-faculty-related students receiving scholarship assistance does not vary substantially from the 23.8% for the school as a whole.

In analyzing the questionnaire responses an attempt has been made to correlate certain factors with success of the students in the

study of Spanish. Through the next-to-last meeting period of the second semester two students have averages in the A range and three in the B range. As percentages of the class these groups represent 16.6% and 25% respectively compared to school-wide percentages of 7% A's and 39% B's. As a whole, the class is performing less well than the school-wide averages.

Nine factors relating to educational and family background, motivation and attitude were selected from the questionnarie material—those which might be expected to affect most directly success or failure. In terms of these factors the students with A and B averages in Spanish were compared to those with averages of C or less. The factors are: previous Spanish schooling, travel to Spanish-speaking areas, favorite subject, father's educational level (completion of graduate school), mother's educational level (completion of college), whether Spanish is known by a family member, best subject in terms of grade average, proficiency self-rating and educational ambitions in terms of intention to attend graduate school.

This analysis showed a high degree of correlation among those earning honor grades (A and B) and a substantially lower order of correlation among the less successful group. Of the five more successful students, four have studied Spanish previously, four have traveled to Spanish-speaking areas, three say that Spanish is their favorite subject, four have fathers who completed graduate school and mothers who completed college, three have family members at home who know Spanish, four call Spanish their best subject, three

rate themselves as good or better in overall Spanish proficiency, and three expect to go to graduate school. Incidence of positive responses ranges from 4 to 8 with an average of 6.4

Of the less successful group, numbering seven, four have studied Spanish previously, one has traveled to Spanish-speaking countries, one rates Spanish as his favorite course, three have fathers who completed graduate school, five have mothers who are college graduates, four have family members at home who know Spanish, one rates Spanish as his best subject, one rates himself as good or better in overall proficiency, and three intend to go to graduate school. Number of positive responses in this group range from 1 to 6 and average 3.3. The student with the highest number of positive responses is the highest ranking student in the less successful group. The successful group ranks higher in all categories. The factor with the highest correlation between the two groups is that of college-graduate mothers (80% to 71%) and the lowest correlation appears in the areas of travel and "best subject" (80% to 14%) with the next lowest "favorite subject" and proficiency self-rating at good or better (60% to 14%).

It is interesting to note that of the seven less successful students five state that mathematics is their favorite subject, while four of these report that they are doing best in mathematics. Of the more successful students only one reports a subject other than Spanish as his best and favorite (mathematics). If preference and performance equate to ability this experience would seem to run

counter to the fact stated by Academy staff that mathematics ability as exemplified by SSAT score correlates higher with eventual overall success than do verbal skills.

Pimsleur[23] touches on this area in his "King City" studies in discussing personality types of successful and unsuccessful language students. It was his opinion that persons who require order and structure in everything they do may react unfavorably to the different set of learning procedures required by language acquisition where things are not what they have always seemed, i.e. "A door is not a door but a porte." Tolerance for ambiguity and frustration is an apparent need of the language student, who if he is rigid and structured in his thinking or requires the support of an immutable set of laws governing the material being studied may not be able to bear making a mistake in speaking and so will not speak.

One of the factors related to this area of the question is a somewhat subjective ~~one relating to the~~ basis on which the teacher may evaluate his students. Pimsleur found that the foreign language courses at King City were not so audio-lingual as to challenge students to express themselves in the language.[24] The teachers judged students largely on written homework, written tests and highly structured oral responses, none of which is as anxiety-provoking as the give and take of free conversation. Gardner also ~~maintains~~ mentions this

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[23]Pimsleur, op. cit., p. 50.

[24]Pimsleur, op. cit., p. 51.

problem of teacher-student discrepancies in evaluating the development of proficiency in connection with his studies of French students in Connecticut. Students there with outstanding expressive proficiency felt that they were progressing well, but teachers, judging from the grades assigned, did not agree in many cases.[25] In other cases students with high ability in language comprehension felt that they were doing well, but the teachers did not agree. Gardner did find that in many cases students who evidenced high motivation to learn the languages both instrumentally and integratively, felt that they were progressing well and in these cases teachers were more prone to agree. He suggests the need for further research into the effect on student motivation of such student-teacher discrepancies.

What is evident at Exeter is that liking for and identification with the teacher correlates more highly with success in Spanish than with lack of success. This is not a particularly startling finding or a factor necessarily more important in language learning than in other areas of study. However, the fact remains that significantly more students who spontaneously express rapport with the teacher are doing well than are those who do not. Pimsleur[26] found that King City students reacted more favorably and performed better for a teacher in whose command of the language they had confidence (i.e. native speaker). Obviously it can be assumed that the highly integratively

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[25]Gardner, "Attitudes and Motivations in Foreign Language Learning," pp. 133-134.

[26]Pimsleur, op. cit. p. 27.

motivated student will react favorably to a teacher who represents the socio-linguistic group toward which the student is integratively attracted and such a teacher can reinforce the student's integrative tendency. The Exeter teacher is a 50 year-old native of Spain who suggests many of the cultural stereotypes associated with the Spaniard. He is forceful and demanding in his relationship with the students but introduces strong elements of humor. The classroom is organized and disciplined and classes are conducted entirely in Spanish.

The Plaza Sesamo films shown to the class contain four types of visual material:

1. Live-cast studio film set in the plaza setting which is similar in the Latin American context to the street scene used in Sesame Street. These sequences were filmed in Mexico specifically for Plaza Sesamo and use a Mexican cast of Spanish-speaking actors. In many cases one or more of the fantasy figures are included (Paco the Parrot and Abelardo who is the Plaza Sesamo counterpart of Big Bird). These segments generally present elements involving individual relationships with a group and fall within the curriculum categories of Reasoning and Problem Solving and the Child and His World. The cognitive material is essentially conceptual and often presents questions of interpersonal relationships. Examples are:

a. A child must decide how to go home from school, i.e. walking, on the bus, with a friend, etc. and must analyze the alternatives.

b. A child makes a purchase in a store, is given too much change and must consider whether to return the excess or not.

c. A group of children discuss and decide where to go on an excursion, park, zoo, ~~picnit~~ picnic, etc. accommodating the interests of all.

d. Children find various ways of utilizing discarded material.

Sub-categories include the solution of conflicts, self-interest/group interest, and parts of the body and their functions.

2. Film sequences of scenes outside the studio (plaza) setting. Examples are train journeys, river flow from spring to sea, children's play groups from various parts of the world, etc. Some utilize dialogue and some have only musical background. Many are taken from Sesame Street with an over voice dubbed in Spanish. These sequences generally relate to The Child and His World and show elements of the world outside the child's home/school environment, including the differences between various world or regional or urban/rural populations.

3.- Puppet and muppet sequences taken from Sesame Street and dubbed into Spanish. These sequences usually cover the curriculum areas of symbolic representation (words and numbers) and some elements of reasoning and problem solving.

4. Animation. Some cartoon material has been produced in Mexico--although much is taken in dubbed form from Sesame Street. An example of special Mexican-produced material is that dealing with alphabet learning of the Spanish alphabet which differs from the

English. Animation is also used for visual display of words and numbers, as well as certain conceptual material, i.e. up-down, near-far, etc.

When the films were first presented to the target class, it was evidenced that the students had difficulty in understanding audially the rapid conversation between live characters that would be more natural for native Spanish-speaking children, albeit in the 3 to 5 year old age group. Part of this difficulty may have stemmed from an unfamiliarity with Mexican pronunciation although by virtue of the attempt to phrase the dialogue in neutral Spanish this factor does not appear to be a severe impediment. The pace of the conversation, however, would appear to be more rapid than that to which the students are accustomed in class. This would tend to explain in part their more favorable reaction to sequences involving visual images.

From the outset it was evident that the class reacted more positively to sequences involving pictorial or visual symbols, ~~i.e.~~ as used ~~articles~~ in film segments relating to counting, spatial relations and number relationships. The students, in their first exposures to the films, commented favorably on animated sequences displaying words. While audial comprehension improved over the course of the viewing cycle, visual images continue to have a strong impression on the viewers. The reaction is as favorable for visual representation of concepts (up-down, few-more) as it is for simple picturization of specific words. In cases where concepts were discussed in a film, first without and then with pictorialization the students commented that they learned more from the segment with visual support.

One basic difference must be borne in mind which distinguishes the Exeter students from the original target groups of Sesame Street and Plaza Sesamo. The students at Exeter are literate, that is to say, they can read and write functionally in their own language and can recognize letters, words, parts of speech, etc., whereas one of the principal purposes of Sesame Street and Plaza Sesamo is the "inculcation of literacy consciousness" as Harman describes it[27] and establishing the preconditions for reading in pre-school children. The fact that Plaza Sesamo emphasizes as we have seen, whole words and sentences rather than letter-by-letter word building (as in Sesame Street) would seem to make it more applicable to language learning and vocabulary building. The Exeter students (all have been individually interviewed as to their reaction to the films) are unanimous in stating that visual display of words and images assists them in development of audial comprehension of non-visual sequences with which they originally had difficulty.

The verbalized reaction of the class and individual members focuses on two areas in which they claim to have benefitted; first, vocabulary learning, especially in cases of visual representation, where repetition is a factor, (Sesame Street contained a repeat factor of 8) and, second, in improvement of audial comprehension, simply by exposure to more rapid conversation than that to which they

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[27]David Harman, Community Fundamental Education, Lexington Books, D.C. Heath, and Company, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1974, p. 87.

are accustomed in class. In the latter respect it should be remembered that audial comprehension may be assisted by associating the audial sensation with a visual sensation, even if a word or concept is not directly depicted in the screen. It is evident from the comments of the class, however, that their association with the visual images depicted takes place within their own cultural ~~concepts~~ content. Even the most integratively motivated students show no transfer of cultural themes into a Mexican or Latin American context. Beyond this, the students react most strongly and favorably to sequences containing an element of similarity to their own North American culture. It might have been expected that integratively motivated students might react favorably to sequences containing unique elements of the Latin American culture to which they are attracted, but interviews with the students do not evidence the presence of this phenomenon. For example, they reacted favorably in the great majority to a cartoon sequence depicting stereotyped Mexican bandits robbing a train but verbally referred to the sequence as showing "bandits," "robbers," "guys on horseback" etc. without a single reference to their Mexican characteristics.

Likewise positive reaction is more evident to themes depicting patterns of behavior associated with the male role. One student commented favorably on a sequence involving two men in competition to keep a pole upright, specifically mentioning the competitive aspect. Another cartoon sequence involving Batman and Robin figures was favorably received and the underlying cognitive theme understood. Filmed sequences depicting young children in play groups or girls

playing with dolls are less well received and apparently the underlying cognitive themes are less well understood. The resistance to cultural transferance, even among integratively motivated students, is an interesting and unexpected implication of the study and one which in theory merits consideration in relation to the curriculum planning of language-teaching film material.

A further comment on technique is warranted. In presenting the Plaza Sesamo material to the Exeter class, the film was stopped frequently to permit discussion and repetition of vocabulary from one section of the film before a new section was viewed. It is evident that repetition and the intervention of the teacher at repeated intervals is necessary for the optimum results of such a teaching medium.

In summary, the study has suggested certain preliminary conclusions which warrant further research.

1. The Plaza Sesamo format can produce positive student reaction and appears to offer possibilities in vocabulary and audial comprehension development for introductory students.

2. The degree of learning is directly affected by the presence of visual symbols and repetition.

3. The Plaza Sesamo format, use of fantasy figures, cartoons, etc., is not too infantile for adolescent introductory language students.

4. The whole-word approach introduced for Plaza Sesamo is better suited to language-learning audiences such as the Exeter students than is the building-block approach of Sesame Street.

5. Cognitive concepts must be taught, at least at the introductory level, in terms and images that are culturally recognizable to the audience. It appeared from the study that the student audience reacted more favorably to segments taken directly from Sesame Street in translation than to the segments produced in live-cast form in Mexico. It may be that the production technique of the Sesame Street segments was more sophisticated.

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Appendix A

Place of Residence:

Grade at Exeter:

School attended prior to Exeter:

Months or years studied Spanish:

at Exeter

elsewhere

Reasons for studying Spanish:

a. Only to fulfill Exeter language requirement

b. to further your conversational skills

c. interest in Spanish culture and history

d. interest in Spanish literature

How many years do you expect to study Spanish:

at Exeter?

at College?

Other?

Travels or residence in Spanish speaking countries. Indicate place and duration of visit.

Indicate your proficiency at present in Spanish:

written:

spoken:

grammatical:

Are you having difficulty with Spanish? If so, indicate with what aspect of the language:

Languages studied:
Where and for how long?

Foreign languages spoken by members of your family?

Are any of your relatives foreign born? Where?

If in this country, for how long?

Father's occupation?

Is he an Exeter alumnus?

Level of (his) education completed?

Mother's occupation?

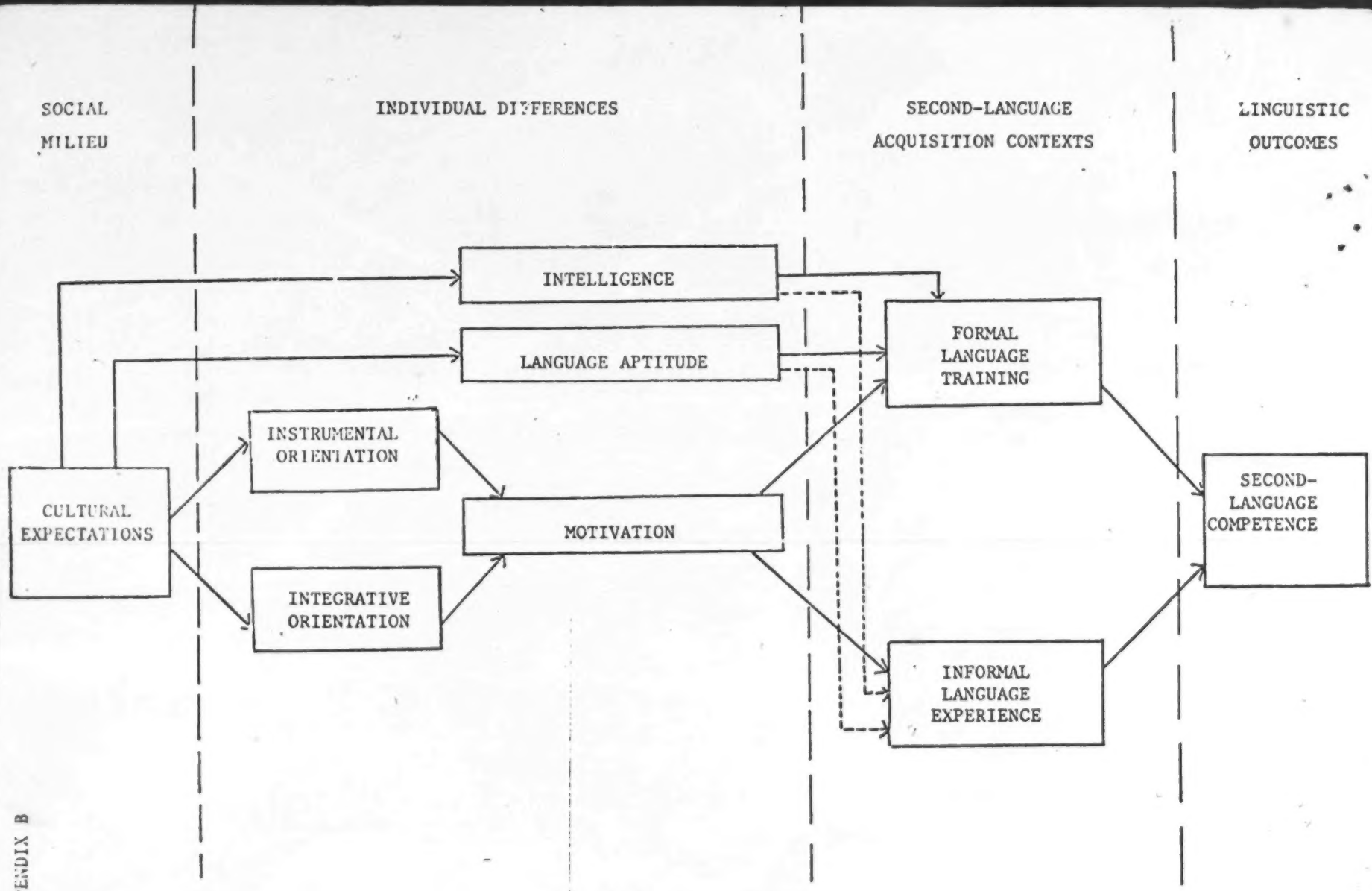
Level of (her) education completed?

Your own future academic plans?

What are your future professional plans?

Date of Birth? Place of birth?

Are you enjoying the study of Spanish? Why?



APPENDIX B

Figure 1: Schematic Representation of the Theoretical Model

(from Gardner et al, 1974)